

Chairman - Councillor A T A Godfrey

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

Cabinet:

G P K Pardesi
R Kenney
I D Fordham
R P Cooke

A F Reid
J Hood
A N Pearce

Audit and Accounts:

R A James
P W Jones
P A Leason

A M Loughran
D M McNaughton
D P Rouxel

Also present:- Councillor L Nixon

Officers in attendance:-

T Clegg	-	Chief Executive
C Forrester	-	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources)
I Curran	-	Head of Law and Governance
J Aupers	-	Head of Transformation and Assurance
S Baddeley	-	Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager
E Fullagar	-	Chief Accountant
W Conaghan	-	Press and Communication Manager
J Allen	-	Democratic Services Officer

CAA1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M G Dodson (substituted by P W Jones) and Councillor A R McNaughton (substituted by Councillor D M McNaughton).

CAA2 Auditors Annual Report for 2023-22 and 2022-23

Members welcomed Avtar Sohal from Grant Thornton UK LLP to the meeting.

Avtar Sohil gave context to the Annual Report and stated that the council had moved on from the reported position. He also commented that the issues raised were as a result of Covid and capacity rather than through negligence. He also acknowledged that it takes time to address the weaknesses.

No questions were raised by Members.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee the correspondence of the external auditor be noted.

CAA3 The Council's Response to the Auditor's Annual Report 2021/22 and 2022/23

The Chief Executive expressed his gratitude to Avtar for the detail in the report which has allowed the Council opportunity to reflect. Steps to remedy the issues have been identified.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer summarised the report and reiterated that the Annual Report was a moment in time and the Council has moved forward since then.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) confirmed that he is currently satisfied that there are sufficient funds set aside for the finance team recovery and that this will be monitored and fed back to Audit and Accounts as required.

Cabinet Members then voted on the recommendations as set out, which were declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee:

- (a) the findings, recommendations and management comments set out in the External Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) for 2021/22 and 2022/23 be noted
- (b) that Members recommend to Council accepting the Statutory Recommendation set out in the AAR for 2021/22 and 2022/23
- (c) that Members recommend to Council the approval of the improvement plan attached as an APPENDIX to address the issues identified in the AAR

- (d) That Members note the additional resources required to address the issues identified in the AAR as set out in 5.9, which are provided for in the budget for 2024/25.

Audit and Accounts Committee Members then voted on the recommendations as set out, which were declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee:

- (a) the findings, recommendations and management comments set out in the External Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) for 2021/22 and 2022/23 be noted;
- (b) that Members recommend to Council accepting the Statutory Recommendation set out in the AAR for 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- (c) that Members recommend to Council the approval of the improvement plan attached as an APPENDIX to address the issues identified in the AAR;
- (d) That Members note the additional resources required to address the issues identified in the AAR as set out in 5.9, which are provided for in the budget for 2024/25.

The external auditors and internal finance and assurance teams were thanked for the work undertaken.

CHAIR